

Guide to permit processing

We created this guide to help you through the permit process. We hope this information will help you have a good permitting experience.

We know a long processing time can be more than irritating, it can mean your hold on a low interest rate slips away, or you end up paying a mortgage on a building you cannot live in. Perhaps you have to rent housing while your new home is in process. We want to share a few “tricks of the trade” to help you get your permit when you need it.

Permits protect you

Insist on permits! It does not pay to cut corners when it comes to your biggest financial asset, your home or business.

Permits help at the time of sale

Many lenders insist that construction work is done with permits to ensure the house is safe for future occupants. If the work was done without a permit, you may have to scramble to have the work re-done or inspected in order to close a sale. This can cost time and money.

Start smart to save time and money

Apps of steel

Make your application as complete as possible. Do your homework and anticipate questions. Check submittal requirements. Applications and submittal checklists are available on our website at www.clark.wa.gov/development.

Hire well and stay in control

Check references and ask about turnaround times before you hire a contractor, engineer, designer, etc. Seasoned professionals who regularly work in Clark County know what is expected of them.

Once the permit process begins, stay in touch with your team. Validate the information you are given using our website. Faxed permit updates are also available by calling (360) 397-2477.

Check a contractor's license

Ensure that a contractor is legally licensed and bonded to work in Washington. Beware of a contractor willing to work without permits. Contact Washington State Labor and Industry at (800) 647-0982 to check on a contractor's license status.

Insist that the contractor use only licensed plumbers and electricians

Other than homeowners working on their own homes, only licensed and insured plumbers and electricians are legally allowed to do this work. Professional licenses reflect years of professional training and annual continuing education.

Insist that contractors organize work for effective inspections

Inspections help ensure that the work meets the building and fire codes. Inspections reveal minor problems that could lead to costly repairs, and also liability and life-safety concerns such as structural weaknesses, dangerous wiring, and defective plumbing. Check the inspections as they proceed using our website or fax.

Revised 4/11/11



Community Development
1300 Franklin Street, Vancouver, Washington
Phone: (360) 397-2375 Fax: (360) 397-2011
www.clark.wa.gov/development/



For an alternate format, contact the Clark County ADA Compliance Office.
Phone: (360) 397-2025
Relay: 711 or (800) 833-6384
E-mail: ADA@clark.wa.gov

If inspections are being re-scheduled or are behind schedule, ask your contractor for an explanation.

Custom residential construction takes more time

Some new construction is called “same as”, which means that a builder has had the plans approved and replicates the house in multiple locations. These homes require seven or less days for building permit review and approval. In the field, most “same as” homes are built in about 120 days. Custom homes take longer to review because plans examiners look at every feature. In some cases, structural engineering is required. Custom home plan reviews can take up to 21 days. Construction of custom homes can take much longer, depending on the contractor and the complexity of the project.

Use predevelopment conferences for commercial construction

Our plans examiners are happy to meet with you before you submit an application. We will help you and your consultants identify challenges so you experience fewer surprises. Call (360) 397-2375 ext. 4086 to schedule a conference.

Do your homework for a complete application

Very few applicants are in control of a project from the first step of subdivision to the final step of building Certificate of Occupancy. Before you purchase a lot within a subdivision, take the time to check the status of the project.

Few things can be more frustrating than thinking you are ready to proceed, only to find that there is a loose end from a previous step.

Every project is different and every project can be complicated. Don't be afraid of conditions of approval. Just make sure your

professional team knows about them and is responding. Your professional team should get these documents and share them with you.

Every project, every time

- Know your comprehensive plan and zoning designations, and what they mean and what they allow you to do.
- Know that you have a legal lot for purposes of zoning and platting.
- Know whether your area is under a construction moratorium or concurrency restrictions.
- Know the general extent of critical areas (wetlands, habitat, slopes, shorelines, etc.) on the site.
- Know the transportation plan for the area.
- Know if you have public water and sewer or if you need to drill a well and install a septic system.

If you purchase land that has a site plan or plat that has preliminary plan (land use) approval:

- Know the public and private sector planner and engineer for the project.
- Know what the specific project has been approved for.
- Know the conditions identified in the hearing examiner's decision or the Development Services manager's decision.
- Know which permits are approved and which are outstanding.
- Understand the requirements for final engineering, both for storm water and transportation.

If you purchase land that has final plat approval (residential) or final site plan approval (commercial) and construction is ready to begin:

- Know the public and private sector planner and engineer for the project in the planning and the engineering phases.

- Know the conditions identified in the hearing examiner's decision or the Development Services manager's decision, and any additional conditions imposed in the engineering phase.
- Know when the conditions must be met. Are they applied before final approval of plat? When the building permit is issued? Before a certificate of occupancy can be issued?
- Know which permits are approved and which are outstanding.
- Check the site development inspection records. Are site improvements complete and approved?
- Understand the final engineering plans, both for stormwater and transportation.

There are several things you can do to avoid a long wait in the lobby

Know where you are

Community Development accepts building applications for permits in the unincorporated areas of Clark County. If you are not certain if your project is in a city or the county, you can find out online using the Property Information Center at gis.clark.wa.gov. Enter your street address or parcel number. The property tax record will appear. Look at the column titled Administrative Data. The jurisdiction is listed.

Know what you want

Residential plumbing and mechanical (heating and cooling) permit applications may be submitted by fax; you do not have to apply in the Permit Center. You must come in, however, to pick up the permit and pay fees.

Find information

Information about building permits can be found on our website at

www.clark.wa.gov/development. You can also come to our lobby and pick up handouts and application forms. We have computers there for your use. Have your parcel number or address ready. Your parcel number or address is a key piece of information.

Use the clock to your advantage

The Permit Center in downtown Vancouver is open weekdays 8:00 to noon, except Wednesdays when it is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Look at our current wait times online to plan your visit.

We also offer appointments. Call (360) 397-2375 ext. 4078 to schedule one.

Use the calendar to your advantage

With our mild climate, housing construction occurs practically year round. The busiest time of year is April to October. One way to decrease permit review time is to submit applications off-season.

Come prepared

You would be surprised how many applicants discover they have forgotten something important. Double-check your submittal checklist.

Bring your checkbook

Fee calculation can be difficult. If possible, bring a checkbook and write the check after the permit technician has informed you of the total fee. If this is not possible, try to give the person applying for the permit the flexibility to write a second check to complete the fees. If the check for the fees is written for more than the required amount, the county will refund the overage unless it is less than \$200.00. Refunds take six weeks.

Keep track of your progress and stay in control

Keep track of your progress

There are two ways to keep track of your building project at any time of the day or night. You can get a faxed progress report by calling (360) 397- 2477. You must have your building permit application number. This can be found on the application summary you receive at the time of application.

You can access the same information online by looking at the Project Status. Again, your permit number is essential. In addition, you will need the last four digits of your file number, which can be found on your application summary on the top right-hand corner.

Avoid time on hold

When the county reviews and returns plans with comments, confirm with the consultants when those plans will be re-submitted. When the plans are with the county, use the fax or website to check their status. Once inspections start, you can monitor the daily inspection progress over the fax or website also.

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safety concerns such as structural weaknesses, dangerous wiring, and defective plumbing. Check the inspections as they proceed using our website or fax. If inspections are being re-scheduled or are behind schedule, ask your contractor for an explanation.

Certificates of Occupancy are the goal

Don't let your team lose focus. Don't quit until a Certificate of Occupancy or Job Complete is in your hand. Certificates of Occupancy may require the sign-off of several agencies, including agencies outside of Clark County. We cannot issue a Certificate of Occupancy until everyone has approved the project. The more experienced your team, the more likely it is that they can coordinate all approvals to result in faster Certificates of Occupancy.

Time is money

Most custom homes and commercial projects require construction loans. At the end of a project the interest payments get more expensive. The faster your building is complete, the less money you will pay on the loan. Being prepared and being timely saves you money.

Permit Center

Public Service Center
1300 Franklin Street, first floor
Vancouver, WA 98660

Mailing address:

P.O. Box 9810
Vancouver, WA 98666-9810

Main phone: (360) 397-2375

Fax: (360) 397-6049

Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and

Friday: 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Permit Services Manager: Jon Dunaway
Chief Building Official: Jim Muir

Permit information

www.clark.wa.gov/development

Property information:

gis.clark.wa.gov

Land use information:

(360) 397-2375 ext. 4489

Building permit hotline:

(360) 397-2375 ext. 4078

Project status:

www.clark.wa.gov/development

(360) 397-2477

Schedule an appointment to apply for permits:

(360) 397-2375 ext. 4078

Schedule an appointment with a plans examiner:

(360) 397-2375 ext. 4086

Schedule building inspections:

(360) 397-2477

Builder sources:

Building Industry Association of Clark
County

(360) 694-0933

www.biaofclarkcounty.org

Southwest Washington Contractors
Association

(360) 694-7922

Washington State Contractors Licensing
Department

(800) 647-0982